

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions

### God and "Me"

MR. WALTER TOMLINSON writes, more in anger, I think, than seeking an explanation, asking me what authority I have for saying that Hitler is a deeply religious man. Well, on the face of the matter, Hitler has the lack of concern for the rights of others, all the ruthlessness of nature, the supreme disregard for objective truth, and the capacity for regarding himself as a mere instrument of God, or "destiny," which have been characteristic of deeply religious natures. But, to put it this way would invite the retort that this is no more than a personal opinion—which is a queer, but popular, objection, since an opinion that is an opinion, and not a mere echo, must be personal. But I will take the only authority that anyone has ever been able to produce on this matter, the belief of the person concerned. From one of many such utterances, I take the nearest to my hand, which happens to be one made by Hitler in Vienna immediately after the annexation of Austria, and which I take from that excellent "sixpenny," *Hammer or Anvil*:—

I believe it was God's will to send out a boy from here into the Reich to make him great, to raise him to be the Führer of the nation, to enable him to lead his homeland back to the Reich. There is a higher dispensation and we are nothing but its instruments. When, on March 9, Herr Schuschnigg broke his agreement I felt the moment had come when the call of Providence had now gone out to me. And what then happened in three days was only conceivable as the execution of the wish and will of Providence. In three days the Lord destroyed them. And to me he vouchsafed the favour of being able to incorporate my home in the Reich on the day of the betrayal.

That, I think, has the authentic religious note, and much had happened, and has happened since, to justify the conviction in Hitler's mind that God was working with him. When one remembers that right through the Spanish War, when it was being reported

in the press and confirmed by observers, and by men who had returned from Spain, that Italy and Germany were fighting in Spain with tanks, men, aeroplanes, and also sinking British ships—facts now trumpeted by both Hitler and Mussolini—and that the British Government was the only one unaware of these things, and when one recalls the way in which our Government stood by while Hitler made advance after advance, ending in the admitted fraud of Munich, until Hitler has become a real danger to world peace, how is a religious man to explain all this save on the theory that Providence had selected him for the task, and to help him had blinded both the Prime Minister and his Cabinet? For these, if not religious men, are at least "all honourable men." Hitler may well believe that deception so patent, and lies so obvious, could succeed only with the help of God.

I do not say that Goering and Goebbels and that little knot of degenerates believe they are the instruments of God, because these men are of the true criminal type. In the Chicago of a few years back they might well have been "taken for a ride" by a rival gang. But, of Hitler's religiosity, there does not appear to be room for justifiable doubt. I believe he can produce as good evidence for his inspiration, as can the Archbishop of Canterbury. The rival claims of these two remind one of the case of the lunatic who complained to his keeper of the absurdity of another inmate who claimed to be Jesus Christ. That, he explained, "is absurd because I am He."

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### Mouthpieces of God

The list of leading statesmen and others who have always felt they were mouthpieces of God, is a very long one. The King of England, on the religious side, is actually an incarnation of deity, and of one of the most religious Prime Ministers we have had for many years, W. E. Gladstone, Labouchere said that while one might find him playing a game of cards with a fifth ace up his sleeve, Gladstone would feel convinced that God put it there. And, long before Hitler, the ex-Kaiser anticipated him by saying:—

Our Lord and God would never have given himself such pains with our German Fatherland and its people if He had not predestined it for something great.

Next to that sufferer from melancholia, the Emperor of Russia, the German Emperor was the most Christian monarch in Europe. "The Bible," he said, "is the fountain from which I draw light and strength," and one can believe it when we recall his orders to some of his troops on their departure for China:—

When you meet the foe you will defeat him. No quarter will be given, no prisoners will be taken. Let all who fall in your hands be at your mercy.



and compare it with God's instructions to the Israelites:—

When the Lord thy God hath delivered it (a city) into thine hands thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword, but the women and the little ones and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thou shalt take unto thyself

Hitler could not better that advice to his favourite storm troopers, except by adding, "Thou shalt torture both men and women before they are killed."

The United States, though it has no God in the constitution of the Union, is called by good Americans "God's own country," although God's territorial supremacy may be questioned by gangsters, and "muscleing in" strictly forbidden. But the conviction that what one does is ordered by God, or that one is being led by God, is one of the commonest features in human history. Naturally we Britishers are not behind in this. In the last war the Bishop of Ripon was one who declared, "Our cause is identical with God's Cause," and the Bishop of London not to be outdone by anyone where stupidity could be displayed, said that "If no sparrow falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge, then no life in this great city is unwatched and unmarked." That is something to remember when the next bombing of London takes place. It will be quite comforting to the clergy and such pious members of the Cabinet as Sir Samuel Hoare, Sir Thomas Inskip, and Sir John Simon, to know when they are sitting in underground re-inforced concrete shelters, that God is keeping an eye on the people who are being blown to pieces with German bombs.

Long before Hitler, the way in which God was linked up with the British Empire was put very clearly by the late W. T. Stead. For some reason or another Stead had a great admiration for that prince of freebooters, Cecil Rhodes. And out of that admiration there grew the desire to prove that Rhodes, like himself, was led by God. Stead had received many letters from Rhodes, and he elaborated the following statement of Rhodes' religion. Rhodes, he said, believed that there was an even chance that God existed. So he reasoned:—

If there be a God, of which there is an even chance, what does he want me to do? I think I shall not be far wrong in concluding that He would like me to do pretty much as He is doing. Therefore the first thing for me to do is to try and find out what God is doing in this world, and as he is manifestly fashioning the English-speaking race as the instrument by which He will bring in a state of society based upon justice, liberty and peace, He must obviously wish me to do what I can to give as much scope and power to that race as possible. Hence, if there be a God, I think that what He would like me to do is to paint as much of the map of Africa red as possible, and to do what I can to promote the unity and extend the influence of the English-speaking race.

It is on this common ground of religion that Hitler and the Kaiser, and the Czar, and Gladstone, and Rhodes and many other Statesmen meet. God's Germans are equalled by God's Americans; God's Americans are matched by God's Spaniards, God's Italians who were fighting for Franco and the Church and all are equalled—perhaps we ought to say eclipsed—by God's Englishmen. Even Charles Peace, the famous burglar and murderer may have felt that for the first time in his life God had deserted him when he was hanged for murder. At any rate he was a regular attendant at Church in between his lengthy series of "jobs."

### Piety and Rascality

The world is so used to this expression of desire in the form of a belief that it is God's will, that ordinary men or women brush the matter on one side with the judgment, "humbug" or "hypocrite." But that is a very superficial view to take. It is a little nearer the mark to say that it is reason finding an apology for "instinct." But that, too, is a bad way to put it, because "instinct" is a word used in a very misleading manner, and cloaks non-understanding with an apparent air of scientific accuracy. With many writers and speakers, "instinct" is just as much a "blessed word" as "Mesopotamia" was to the old lady who derived great comfort from it when reading the Bible. It would not be a bad thing if we could abolish for about a generation such a word as "instinct."

What is really at issue here is a conflict between the social and anti-social feelings of mankind. It is this that makes man at once a predatory animal and an animal that is subject to opposing impulses; an animal that is ready to sacrifice itself in the interests of others, and one with whom the egoistic impulse is manifested on the lowest level. But few men are sufficiently de-socialized consciously to perform a completely anti-social act. Some justification for the gratification of feelings on the lower level must be found. Thus the mere love of power finds its excuse in such terms as Rhodes found concerning an extension of the British Empire, or Hitler finds in a fanatically stupid claim to the superiority of the German "race." Few men have the moral courage to say that they are really aiming at wealth in the exploitation of primitive peoples. They satisfy the better side of themselves by avowing a desire to "develop" a country, and to give its inhabitants the benefits of "civilization." The list of "rationalizations" might be extended indefinitely, but among all these covers for rascality there are none that are so effectively persuasive as religion. For that comes to us as the oldest and the most imperative cluster of terms in the language. Excite religious feelings and you excite conscious activities that were recognized before man became conscious of the urge of social impulses. There is therefore no reason to say that Hitler does not feel that he is an instrument of God because his character is such that decent-minded men and women might well shrink from associating with him on any terms save that of a physician or a prison warden. He is honest in his profession of religious faith. That it provides an outlet for sheer brutality and dishonesty is only an extremely unpleasant manifestation of an every-day fact.

When Shelley said that the name of God has fenced about all crime with holiness he made a generalization, the truth of which no genuine scientific thinker will question. When the Kaiser and Hitler said that the German God had in view a great future for Germany, they acted as Rhodes was acting when he tricked the Boers, plundered the natives, and dreamed of a world ruled by British millionaires. The masters of the Inquisition were as convinced they were carrying out the work of God when they cleared Spain of its best brains and finest characters in their attempt to extirpate heresy. So also felt Cortez and Pizzaro when they destroyed two civilizations in South America; so argued the Church when it helped Mussolini to crush Spain and Abyssinia. And, if that pseudo-philosopher, the present Dean of St. Paul's, is right when he says that there is a plan running through the whole of evolution, then Hitler and Chamberlain, Rhodes and Roosevelt, the burglar and the philanthropist, the man who heals and the man who wounds are all part of that plan. You cannot have a plan running through evolution and have



good and bad in it without that being part of the scheme.

I am not concerned to deny that men without belief in God may be as bad as those with it. I have always claimed, as an Atheist, that the religious world has no monopoly of lying, brutality or hypocrisy. But one thing may be said on behalf of the non-theistic position—it limits the range and the strength of the excuses that man may make to himself for his rascalities. Atheism does not furnish a screen between his actions and conscience. He cannot delude himself with the belief that he is an instrument in the hands of a God who is working out a plan. He cannot argue that plundering native races is compensated by the gospel of salvation that he gives them in exchange for their land and liberty. The unbeliever may be a scoundrel, but he cannot easily be a hypocrite who is deluded by his own hypocrisy. Applied generally, I do not agree that Shakespeare's counsel "to thine ownself be true and it must follow as the night the day thou canst not then be false to any man," is a rule that will always secure *right* action. But it does at least make towards the provision of a guarantee that the man may see himself as he is, and is, therefore, less likely to attribute his own rascality or mean motives to the will of God, or to a primitive form of tribal devotion.

CHAPMAN COHEN

## The Rise and Progress of Parliament

REPRESENTATIVE Government in Britain has evolved from rude inceptions. The Saxon Witan, the Council of the Wise, although subordinated to the theories introduced into England by the Norman Conquest, still continued to exercise a minor influence. But for all practical purposes, the system slowly established in the Norman and Plantagenet periods may be considered the basis of the legislative, executive and judicial spheres of administration which prevail to-day.

Under the early Kings, however, these now distinct departments were intermingled. Claims for the possession of lands, and other civil actions, as well as criminal and treasonable indictments were all subject to the jurisdiction of the Crown. The royal judgment was delivered on a document prepared by a literate official, who was almost invariably a highly-placed ecclesiastic who sealed the instrument. But before deciding in any important case the officiating Chancellor summoned certain barons, bishops and abbots to the King's Court. Over this Council the monarch usually presided or, if he was absent, the priestly Chancellor, in consultation with his councillors, would pronounce judgment.

In a community where Saxon, Danish and Norman customs co-existed, a law common to all was certain to emerge. Obviously, the King's Court proved inadequate to deal with the litigation of the whole population. So local crimes and other causes were dealt with in the barons' courts, but the Crown soon realized the danger of devolving the administration of justice upon powerful and unscrupulous feudal barons. Consequently, sheriffs were commissioned to hold courts in their respective Shires to conduct legal business. These local courts exercised a jurisdiction far more comprehensive than the County Courts of our day have ever possessed.

The early county courts tended more and more, as time went on, to adjudicate in accordance with established custom. At a later stage, when certain out-

standing councillors had become proficient in the law from their experiences in the King's Court, these were selected by the sovereign to tour the provinces and hold assizes in the local courts. And it is noteworthy that in the royal instructions to the sheriff to summon the county authorities to prepare for the coming of the itinerant justices, the principle of representation is dimly foreshadowed. Also, as a result of the more uniform decisions of the assize judges, laws which applied throughout the kingdom were soon established.

Henry II. was a capable ruler who strengthened the authority of the throne, afterwards so shamelessly abused by his son John, who was forcibly compelled to affix his signature to a charter defining the rights of his subjects irrespective of rank. John's son and infant successor, Henry III., no sooner attained his majority than he proceeded to emulate his despotic father's evil example. The old conflict between the barons (who were allied with the burgesses) and the Crown was resumed. But in 1264, the King and his son Edward were defeated and captured at the Battle of Lewes by Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester. The brief ascendancy of de Montfort and his supporters was terminated when, after escaping from custody, Edward and his adherents proved victorious in the Battle of Evesham in 1265, when de Montfort perished in the fray.

Edward I. mounted the throne in 1272, and Westminster Hall became the leading law court presided over by competent judges, although, in special instances, the right of appeal to the King in Council was retained. Now began the custom of framing the law in statutory form, subject to the consideration and approval of the great council now rapidly evolving into a legislative assembly.

With spendthrift rulers, money, the main thing needful in this wicked world, was in constant request, and the passion for pelf was the chief cause of the contentions between John and his successor with the landowners and the rising mercantile community. Warfare and other forms of folly depleted the royal treasury, and the rulers adopted any available device in order to replenish their empty exchequer. These malpractices led to Runnymede and Henry's uproarious reign.

The English Justinian, Edward I., astutely detected the error his predecessors had committed in uniting the lesser land-holders and merchants with the feudal barons and the Church in their opposition to the Crown. So to conciliate the former he decided to include their representatives in his council. Profiting by de Montfort's example, the King instructed the County Courts to each appoint two knights and furnish their expenses when attending his council's conclaves. Writs for this purpose were also issued to the boroughs. The monetary objective of this innovation is plainly evident. As Lionel Curtis phrases it in his *Civitas Dei*: "These knights and merchants were to settle with the King the revenue to be paid him from the shires and towns. The King in the writs he issued from Chancery was careful to specify that the settlements made with him in Council by these knights were to be final and not to be subject to further confirmation by the County Courts and the Borough Councils which had sent them to bargain on their behalf. The settlements they made were to bind their constituents." Thus Edward I. unconsciously created an assembly that could subject his successors to legal restraint. From this crude beginning gradually developed the principle that taxation without representation is robbery.

But not merely were these early representatives expected to provide money for the Crown, but the duty devolved upon them of collecting the taxes imposed



on their constituents, who were to comply with the decisions of those they elected. These thankless duties were far from being popular, and cities and boroughs frequently petitioned for release from the trouble and expense of representation.

Yet, sufficient members were sent by shires and cities to initiate the system and, as the electoral areas were known as *communes*, this led to their representatives being termed the Commons. Limited in number as the new members were, still they considerably augmented the attendance at the council. In the presence of the head of the State, the provincial newcomers were naturally diffident. So they decided to select a Speaker who could submit to the King and his baronial and ecclesiastical advisers what little they deemed it prudent to suggest. These new members appointed their Speaker from their own body in the Chapter House at Westminster, and he there received instructions from his colleagues concerning his petition to the throne.

Although primarily interested in supply the Crown was also anxious to enlist the services of the Commons in curbing the intransigence of a disdainful and turbulent baronage. Thus, the knights and burgesses were encouraged to voice local grievances, especially those arising from legal anomalies, and as the generations rolled away, the Crown discovered that the Commons grew more and more reluctant to grant monetary aids until a solemn assurance was given that the grievances they and their constituents suffered should be redressed. Royal promises were all too frequently treated like the proverbial pie-crust, and were only made to be broken. So unsatisfactory were the statutes framed by the authorities to remedy the evils complained of, that the time came when the Commons, with the assistance of the professional lawyers practising in Westminster, themselves prepared the draughts of the measures they desired the council to enact. In 1414, a King, so popular as Henry V., definitely pledged himself not to enact laws contrary to the Commons' requests or to bind them "without their assent."

The time came when Parliamentary approval was essential to any change in statute law, and even the succession of the Crown was provided by legislation. Bills before the Commons were debated, and when the "ayes" were in a majority, the measure was proceeded with, but when the "noes" predominated the bill was dropped or postponed. From this crude inception, the elaborate procedure now observed in Parliament has slowly developed and the methods adopted in those countries that retain legislative assemblies are more or less based upon it.

Prior to the invention of the printing press, bills proposed in Parliament were hand-written and, being few in number, circulated from one member to another. Shortly after Caxton's time, however, in the reign of Henry VII., Acts of Parliament appeared in print, but it is recorded that "so fearful were the Commons of royal interference, and so jealous of the secrecy of their proceedings, that up to the eighteenth century, bills continued to be handled in manuscript only, until they received the royal assent." The eminent historian, Sir Charles Oman, having examined the Parliamentary records, informed Lionel Curtis by letter that: "The first bill that the House directed to be printed and circulated among members before it was discussed, was a bill of 1708, concerning large sums of public money which had passed through the hands of one Edward Whitaker." But, not until the nineteenth century itself was printing employed for general Parliamentary purposes. Then, as legislation became more technical and complex professional draftsmen were commissioned to draw up Parliamentary Bills.

Edward II. antagonized his Queen, the barons, the clergy and the Commons, and was deposed by statute. Under another dethroned monarch, the last of the Plantagenets, Richard II., the power of Parliament was also enhanced. In the impeachment of de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, Richard's favourite Chancellor, the newly-acquired right of Parliament to impeach ministers was plainly manifested. The King bitterly resented the attack on his valued minister, and foolishly threatened to invoke the aid of the French monarchy. He was then reminded of Edward's tragic fate, and was bluntly told that his own contumacy would lead to similar consequences. For Richard was reminded that: "We have an ancient statute, and it was not many years ago experimented (it grieves us that we must mention it) that if the King through any evil design or foolish obstinacy or contempt, or out of a perverse or froward wilfulness, or any other irregular courses, refuse to govern by the laws, statutes and other laudable ordinances of the realm . . . from that time it shall be lawful for his people to depose the King himself from his royal throne."

It was also in the reign of Richard II. that the right of the Commons to examine the public accounts and appropriate supplies was admitted by the Crown. But this right was soon removed by the succeeding Lancastrian ruler and not revived until 1624 and 1641, and its permanent establishment was not secured until 1666 in the reign of Charles II.

Thus, with many vicissitudes our Parliamentary system has slowly evolved from the baronial and clerical Council of Norman times into the legislative assembly of to-day. Its judicial duties, apart from appeals in the Upper Chamber have devolved on separate Courts of Justice which have also been emancipated from Crown control. The Prime Minister is virtually the head of the State, but his tenure of office is now entirely dependent on a majority vote in the Lower Chamber elected under a system of universal adult suffrage.

T. F. PALMER

## The Growing Menace of Romanism

ALTHOUGH we attack all theology and religions based upon it the Papal Church is to be regarded as a special target. And we may, to some extent, appreciate the limited help in discrediting that organization which is contributed by some religionists.

The mild attack on that institution by ex-Dean Inge, as an obscurantist, totalitarian one was mentioned in a former article. To that we add Bishop Barnes' protest against inviting Romanists to join with Anglicans and others in prayer for peace, in view of such action as the support of Franco and his henchmen in Spain.

And now we have useful reprobation of papist machinations in a leaflet which is being distributed in this, and no doubt in other districts by the Second Adventists, the Watch Tower sect, otherwise "Jehovah's Witnesses." To this sect, of course, in a general way, we only pay the tribute of a smile. But we have to insist on toleration for them so long as they (unlike Romanists) confine their teaching and practice to those that are tolerable in the present stage of civilization. Useful quotations appear in the leaflet; and one from the *Catholic Herald* would, if it were widely read, open the eyes of many people, including those silent Rationalists who say that the vagaries of Roman Catholicism are not worth powder and shot, and also of those members of the Labour



Party who say they will not have anything to do with religious quarrels: "Hope for Fascism. Here we have a new movement, still in process of development and amenable to friendly contacts, with a social programme already containing so many reforms advocated by the social encyclicals [of the Popes] that its platform may be said to consist very largely of Catholic planks. . . . British Fascism stands for the Corporate State, the social-economic system favoured by Catholic Austria, Catholic Italy, Catholic Portugal and Catholic Spain. . . . Furthermore, through a reformed upper house [whatever that may mean], British Fascism invites the official co-operation of the Catholic Church to the end that the Government may have guidance in this matter." Another passage, dated May 12 of this year, runs: "ACTION! ACTION! ACTION! There is a growing sense that Catholicity in Great Britain is on the eve of great happenings."

Following this are accounts of attempts in various parts of the country to break up the meetings of the "Witnesses," the beating up of some of them, and the like, much if not all of this being done at the instigation of the priests. In some cases the agreed letting of the halls was withdrawn by the management; in one instance "Father" McDonagh openly threatened to boycott the Celynen Ambulance Hall, and a few hours before the time of an arranged meeting the contract was broken. It is stated that this priest has by boycott and intimidation forced all the managers of halls and cinemas in the district to deny the use of their rooms to the "Witnesses."

Freethinkers, and many others when they know of this insolent arrogance, will heartily subscribe to a paragraph dealing with the general topic: "The Fascist-Catholic hierarchy must know that this is the land of Britain, and not Rome; and that they may freely practise their religion here amongst those who like it; but that they cannot use their religious institution as a political machine to turn over to the Fascist Dictators the liberties of the British people."

To this we add the more comprehensive indictment of C.I.V.I.C., which informs us the Roman Catholic Church "is prepared to use all the weapons associated with political Fascism; war, civil war, imprisonment and torture, the legal suppression of opponents, censorship of the written and spoken word, the incorporation in the civil law of its own particular creed and dogmas, and the complete monopolization of the education of the young. Where the Roman Church lacks strength it makes up for it in shrewdness and cunning. In this country it proceeds with caution, unscrupulously exploiting British tolerance, penetrating every movement of social importance, political, industrial, religious and propagandist in order to regain its old religious and political power. Its representatives hold key positions in the Civil Service, the B.B.C., on the Film Censorship Board, in the Trade Union Movement and on Education Authorities. For the first time since the Reformation a Papal Delegate is to be installed in England. Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax arrange a private audience with the pro-Fascist Pope. These events are important as a barometer of the growing influence of Roman Catholicism in this country."

The penetrative activities extend also to the League of Nations Union. Paragraphs, presumably editorial, in three recent issues of *Headway*, contained plain Papist propaganda. One was mainly a comparison of the late and the new Pope. In another we read, "Cardinal Innitzer's experience . . . should be carefully pondered. The Austrian Archbishop was prepared for a deal when Hitler marched into Austria. He held his hand out to Hitler; he even raised it in the Nazi salute. In exchange he hoped to obtain some concession for Catholics. . . ." And again,

"Cardinal Goman, Archbishop of Toledo, Primate of Spain, has warned those who are seeking to divorce religion from the new State"; and, quoting his words, the paragraph continues, "The revolt of our martyrs [who presumably were Spanish Rebels against the duly established Government, but not, we may suppose, the 'infidel' Moors and the Italians and Germans, who were brought in] against the tyranny of an iniquitous State [the legitimate, progressive State that refused to be deranged if not dominated by an archaic, totalitarian church] is a fact of great importance which should make us reflect." The passage ends with the sentence, "Spain must guard against 'foreign infiltrations' which endanger the treasure of the faith."

The difficulty, however, is to get the vicious features of Romanism known. Some of them are probably unknown to most members of the Church themselves, as well as to a very large majority of other people. It behoves us to try to find some method of making known to Anglicans, Nonconformists, Unitarians, Jews and other non-Romanists that they are liable sooner or later to become subject to a sacerdotal tyranny which will deprive them of mental freedom, result in the control of all education and the subordination of the civil State to the "Holy See," and the legal infliction on heretics of "bodily penalties, even death" (the words of Professor de Luca of the Gregorian University of Rome).

J. REEVES

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## Some Bible Studies

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### II.

DURING the nineteenth century the Higher Critics, as they were called, did their utmost to dethrone the Old Testament from its position as the Word of God. That is, they tried to show that the various books of Moses, Joshua, Solomon, etc., were not written by these famous celebrities but were composed centuries later by unknown scribes, and the whole volume put together, possibly by Ezra, about 500 B.C. There is not very much proof that this was the case; though it is quite possible that Ezra, or some other priest or priests, did put together various "holy" writings. Whether these were what we call the Old Testament is another question. For my own part—and I have really tried hard to get at the truth—I can only say that no one knows what was written by Ezra. We are not even sure he wrote the book which bears his name, and the Jewish "authorities"—whoever they are—are certainly convinced that he never wrote the books in the Apocrypha entitled Esdras, and which are, in spite of that, just as authentic as the "canonical" book. All we know is that certain traditions claim this or that; but as these traditions were not put down in writing till centuries later; their value seems to be almost worthless. There is a thousand times more proof that the tradition that Shakespeare wrote the plays which bear his name is correct than that the traditions regarding who wrote the books of the Old Testament are justified. Yet the tradition regarding Shakespeare is being to-day very strongly challenged—and some of us think quite successfully. We cannot thus be sure of a three century-old tradition in our own day in a civilized country which has as an asset such a discovery as printing to help to authenticate the facts in a permanent form. How much less can we rely upon traditions handed down by credulous and superstitious, as well as almost illiterate, people who could not possibly have made any investigation of happenings supposed to have



taken place hundreds—nay, thousands—of years previously.

The Higher Critics were able to show that the Pentateuch was a composite document written by various people whose motives could be traced in their writings. Whether it is possible to take up a Hebrew sentence and analyse it in such a way as to say that the first two words were written by the Priestly, the next three by the Elohist, and the final words by the Jehovistic writer, is a point upon which I cannot express a positive opinion. Frankly, I can hardly believe it. But I do not doubt for a moment that three hands can be seen in the Pentateuch—and none of them that of Moses.

But to dethrone the Old Testament in this way, after centuries of belief and faith that it was the word of God as revealed to his own people, the Jews, was soon seen to mean the dethronement of the New Testament as well. No amount of trying to read into the words of Jesus something not clearly visible could get away from the fact that the Christian Deity believed in the Old Testament as God's Word. To say that it was not Divine was to belie Jesus himself. This accounts for the modern burst of energy which aims to prove that the Higher Critics were after all quite wrong, that "the Bible is true," that Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and the others, were in actual fact the authors of the books which bear their names, and that God's revelation to man stands as an impregnable rock against all "infidel" assaults.

Mention has been made of Sir Charles Marston's efforts in this direction in these columns, but it is only recently that I have had the opportunity of reading his entertaining work *The Bible is True*. Unlike a good many of the older defences of the Old Testament, Sir Charles depends mostly on the results of excavation. He seems to have taken a good part himself in archaeological discovery, and he has come to the conclusion that God's dealings with man are absolutely accurately described in the Old Testament. Hence his book.

Sir Charles' method is a very simple one. To explain it, let us see how he proves the history of Abraham, as we know it, to be truthfully given in the Pentateuch. First of all there is the fact of Ur of the Chaldees, the town or city or some such place from which the Bible narrative tells us Abraham sprung. Sir Charles has no difficulty in proving that such a place really existed. He goes even further. He shows us photographs of objects which have been dug up from Ur as far back as a thousand years before the date assigned to Abraham. You get thus a helmet of Mes-kalem-dug who was buried a thousand years before Abraham lived there; and you get other proofs that there was a comparatively high state of culture—for those far-off days—in Ur. On these grounds we must regard Abraham "as a man reared and educated in an ancient city, amid a fine culture and civilization, who gave up town life and went to live in tents and to keep sheep, in Canaan." This is the kind of "proof" we get in the majority of cases from Sir Charles to prove that the Bible is true. I have rarely read more fatuous nonsense. He actually believes everything the Bible says about *Shem*—save the mark!—and calmly quotes us Abraham's pedigree from Genesis as being true merely because he thinks it true. Not one scrap of evidence has been dug up from the earth to show that anybody anywhere knew anything whatever about Abraham, his father Terah, or his nephew Lot. Nor one scrap of evidence to show that the Flood story, as related in Genesis, is true. Of course, the excavators came across traces of a flood or floods, but we get floods in England to this day more or less big, and one would

have been surprised had there been no traces of floods in excavations, some of which go back thousands of years.

However, as Dr. Woolley claims to have found proofs that a flood did take place, Sir Charles immediately "reflects upon the dimensions of the Ark." There is not a scrap of evidence whatever about the Ark anywhere, but we are finally informed that "the Ark might have been a great deal larger than the new *Queen Mary*." And that should, of course, prove the truth of the Ark story.

Sir Charles Marston admits that the date of the Deluge is "also uncertain." Actually, he goes whenever he can to "Holy Writ" for his evidence, but overboard it goes when he cannot square the excavations with Bible chronology. He takes immense pains to show why certain dates hitherto considered true—or even infallible—should be thrown over, as in the case of the Exodus, for instance. But by adroitly toying with the dates given to the Egyptian Kings, and calculating from the dates which are given by archaeologists, he comes to the conclusion that certain towns were in existence, mentioned in the Pentateuch as being visited by Abraham or Jacob, or Moses, as the case may be, and hey presto! the Bible *must* be true. Not on a single page has he produced one scrap of evidence that any of these Bible heroes are mentioned anywhere in tablets, or other writings found in the excavations! he even is forced to admit—and it must have been a bitter pill to swallow—that "we know nothing of David and next to nothing of Solomon." Here are the two most famous Kings Judea ever produced, and archaeologists have found absolutely nothing about them after many years of intensive digging. Why? What is the evidence apart from the Old Testament that they ever lived? I must confess that I have found none.

The excavations have discovered, of course, many towns mentioned in the Bible, and surely that is what one would have expected. The Bible writers and editors, if they wanted their stories to be considered true, were bound to place their personages in surroundings well known to the people. Besides, it is not the fact that certain Bible heroes may not have existed as much as the miraculous stories with which they are credited that we Freethinkers are bound to oppose. There might easily have been a Hebrew general called Joshua, but was he able to stop the sun, or perform any miracle whatever? No one doubts that Cæsar invaded Britain, but everybody would have doubted the story if we had been told that he defeated the ancient Britons with a few angels sent by Jupiter. And doubting this story would not have disposed of the other—the landing by the Romans on the South Coast of England and the defeat of the inhabitants.

Although Sir Charles Marston is an intense and fervid believer in the miraculous part of the Old Testament, and although he has set out to show that the "Bible is True," there is not a line in his book which proves that even one miracle has been attested by excavation. As far as the Bible is concerned, really nothing else matters.

H. CUTNER

### Cheerful Resignation

My shadow is short and stumpy to-day;  
It must be nearly noon,  
Noon in the month of May;  
But when comes June  
My shadow will be shorter still:  
Ah well, it is God's will.

B.S.



## Acid Drops

The semi-lunatic Wicks, who recently left this country for Germany, because, he said, he wished to escape the "Jewish reign of terror" in Britain, has sent a letter to the Prime Minister asking if he would guarantee Mrs. Wicks safety if she returned to this country to visit her relatives. Quite properly Mr. Chamberlain has taken no notice of so insulting a request. But we expect to see it reported in Germany, and used by the Nazi propagandists in this country (who may have inspired the letter) that the Prime Minister could not offer such a guarantee for fear of offending the Jews. It must never be forgotten that anti-Semitism is one of the chief planks in the Nazi programme. It was absent from the British programme, until, we suspect, pressure was applied to the English section. Then obedient to German orders it was adopted here; a similar development took place in Italy.

We hope that now the question has been raised in Parliament concerning subsidized Nazi propaganda in Britain that the subject will not be allowed to drop. It is certain that the Home Secretary would not have brought the charge he did if he had not been in possession of facts that warranted his doing so. We do not mean by this that Sir Samuel Hoare, being a Cabinet Minister, would never speak anything but the exact truth. But some of the supporters of Hitler in this country are so highly placed that he would not have said what he did unless he had good evidence in his possession. That the aim of the association in question is merely to foster a better understanding of Germany is just eye-wash. As Sir Samuel Hoare pointed out, the association takes good care to put Germany in a very favourable light in this country, and does nothing to put the truth about England before the Germans. The statement that the society intends to put the British case before Germans is nonsense. No one in Germany is permitted to put any case before the German people that contradicts the filthy lies of Goebbels and Co. A German risks a concentration camp every time he ventures to listen to the B.B.C. Broadcast. Any member of *The Link* who tried it on would soon be silenced. The pretence that the members of the "Link" intend carrying on in Germany, is so weak as to be contemptible.

Professor C. E. M. Joad must have some queer friends, although from some of his comments it looks a case of like attracting like. In an article in the *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, he says that some of his friends find "their agnosticism increasingly unsatisfactory, and go wistfully about the world wishing to God they could believe in God." We have occasionally met this kind of person in the flesh, but more often than not he belongs to that mysterious "they say" group. When we have met him he invariably turns out to be muddle-headed, or a humbug. We don't call him a hypocrite, because that implies conscious deception, and the person we have in view is not clear-headed enough to be a hypocrite.

We can understand a man believing in a God, not believing in a God, or not being able to make up his mind on either side. But how on earth does a man manage to give up a belief, and then go about "wistfully" (that is the stock word with those who write as Professor Joad writes) wishing he had a belief that he has found good reason for not having? If we believe that one whom we once thought honest is a thief, do we then wish we could believe him to be honest while we know he is a thief? We may wish that any person in question may not turn out to be a thief, but that is a regret for him, not for ourselves. Perhaps Professor Joad means this. In that case he should have written differently. If one realizes that belief in God is a belief based on a misunderstanding, or a misinterpretation of facts which we know should be differently interpreted, then we can no longer believe, and there is an end to it. But no sensible man can say "I know this belief is false, but wish I did not know it," which is what Professor Joad's wist-

ful friends appear to be saying. But perhaps they are being misrepresented or perhaps they have never given up belief in a God and are only saying that they feel sure they will be unhappy if they do not believe in a God, which will lead them into another muddle. And we are afraid that Professor Joad is not a good one to lead them into a clearer air.

The Bishop of Chichester, in his final report to the Society of Chichester, "mentioned that the total result of seven year's appeal amounted to £138,568." This huge sum was used for building unwanted churches, not to save people here, but to save their "souls" in the "hereafter." Could money be put to a worse use? We should like to hear of a single rational defence of these "appeals." Money given for churches or missions is just throwing it away without a single useful purpose.

In the conclusions reached at the National Society's Conference published in a pamphlet, *Worship and Education*, full justification of the above remarks will be found. The Bishop of Southwark, for example, protested against the "amorphous apathy" of a mass of well-intentioned people who were infected with what he called "a four-wheeler religion." This means that the only times people come to church is when they bring the baby in a pram to be baptized, when they come in a taxi to be married, and when they come in a hearse to be buried. And yet it is for these people that constant appeals are made for money for more churches!

The Annual Conference of the Methodists was distinguished by two contradictory occurrences. The "leadership of women" was referred to by several speakers who paid handsome verbal tribute to the work which Methodist women are doing in their churches and congregations. But it was decided not to allow women to become regular members of the ministry. The Rev. J. E. Rattenbury made the bewhiskered "case" against women. He said:—

His objection had always amounted to this—that there would be great difficulty in accepting young women, say of twenty-two years of age, because they could only give a qualified offer as a candidate for the ministry. The idea of a life-vocation would be broken down altogether by marriage, and that was far and away the greatest objection he had to the general entrance of women candidates.

It is not easy to understand how a married man can be a Minister of the Methodist and many other churches, a married woman may be a Member of Parliament, and a married woman cannot be an officially recognized Methodist Minister.

A Roman Catholic, evidently a very pious one, which means a very simple one, writes to a Catholic paper enquiring whether there is a patron saint for competitions such as crossword puzzles, football pools and so forth. Now that is what we call straightforward unadulterated religious faith. And one wonders, why not? In this country the Roman Catholic press, with that astuteness that is hard to separate from downright lying and imposture, does not publish the wonderful things that are done in response to paying for sacred candles, or other forms of "racketeering" practised by the Church. We have in these columns published excerpts from more than one Roman Catholic organ where jobs have been obtained, good prices gained for crops, ditto for house sales, ditto for profitable adventures, etc., and all in return for buying so many candles, sold by the church, to burn in honour for some saint or other. It is a very lucrative trade, as it stands, besides the value of the practice in keeping fools with money in the humour for giving to the Church.

So why not football and crossword puzzles? We are quite sure that the Roman Church would not refuse to accept money won in that way, why should it not give a hand in the getting it? More, we are quite willing to lay a wager ourselves that if it were announced that foot-



ball pools were under the guardianship of St. Fozzleum, as sore throats are placed under the care of St. Blaise, there would be more prayers to the former than the latter ever enjoyed. If it is said that the aim of the prayer would be a selfish one, then one may reply that it is not more selfish than a man praying for a safe journey across the sea, and not bothering about his travelling companions. Besides the Church has not been very particular about where or how it got its wealth, the main thing was to get it. It was always a matter of "Stand not on the order of your getting, but get."

Speaking at the Methodist Conference held in Liverpool recently Canon Raven complained that "the best people are turning away from organized religion." What can the Canon expect? It is not true, as was once said, that religion was invented by knaves to impose on fools, but it is true that religion has often been used by knaves to gull fools. And without denying that there are still plenty of fools, or that they are still gulled, a different method of gulling is being used. Fools we expect there will always be, and knaves also, and the problem will also remain of how to protect one against the other. But Canon Raven—a suggestive name, by the way—is only recognizing a truth that has been evident for some time.

Canon Raven also complains, "our congregations are more feminine than masculine, and now we are losing very rapidly the whole of the young educated women of the country." Now we are not arguing that Christianity is less foolish to women than to men—other things equal—but it is the fact that in modern times Christianity has depended more upon women for support than upon men, and when women desert the Church it is a bad lookout—for the parsonry. For one thing, it loosens the hold of the Church on the child, and no one realizes more than the parsonry the fact that if the Church wishes to get believers it must breed them. The adult intelligence, whether masculine or feminine, cannot be brought over and the Churches have almost given up hope in that direction. It looks as though "It began with a woman and will end with one," will work out here.

The decay of the Churches is undeniable. No one seriously disputes that, all that its defenders can urge is "the pity of it," and draw gruesome pictures of what the world would be without it. We are not fearful in that direction, but we would much like some clergyman of standing to consider what this decay of religion—particularly the Christian religion—implies. They must bear in mind that the Christian has had behind it power, widespread influence, wealth, the training of the young, tradition, social prestige, everything in short that would make for its perpetuity. But on all hands the clergy of every denomination are lamenting the decay of the Churches. We would like some competent Christian to offer an explanation of so remarkable a phenomenon. We give them the liberty of our columns if they would care to essay the task.

The Canon suggests a course that he thinks might either keep in the Church what educated women they have, or get some to come back. His plan is that as "not one clergyman in a thousand is competent to act as minister to growing girls and young women." (It is rather late in the day to make that discovery). The church should be officered with "women ministers." So that the only way the church hopes to retain women in the church is to hold out the bait of some inferior place in the ministry, for it is certain the Church will never concede equality to women. We don't think that offer will be very tempting to intelligent women, anyway. Women are not leaving the Church because it does not offer them a job, but because they have found out what a falsehood Christianity is. And one cannot unlearn a lesson of that kind. As we have so often said, You can't un-pull a man's nose. You may keep a man or a woman in ignorance, but once knowledge is acquired it remains. Canon Raven must try again.

We commented recently on the Home Secretary's remarkable announcement in the House of Commons that a bomb that was left in Piccadilly Circus, was prevented from exploding by Providence, a miracle and a police officer. We see that the police officer, Detective Inspector Fabian, has been rewarded with £15 for what he did. No mention is made of giving public recognition to either the miracle-worker or Providence. Meanwhile the man who left the bomb has escaped. Providence, we presume was looking the other way—unless it worked a miracle to enable him to escape and enjoy the downright idiotic announcement made by Sir Samuel Hoare. Such a comment is indicative of the mentality of the one who makes it.

A full-page article in the *Herald* describes "The Curse of Cowdray." Mr. Morton apparently has finished with the Curses and Blessings of the Holy Land, and now tells us of the charming lives of Catholic and other religious persons in the good old days of the much married Henry VIII. Battle Abbey having been "annexed" by the new "Head" of the Church, a monk appeared to the first of the Cowdrays and cursed him. This, of course, would be commonplace and not "news." The Cowdray family seem to have had a perfectly happy time, notwithstanding the "curse" which declared the family should be wiped out "by fire and water." But—about 259 years later—the descendants who could have had no responsibility for the remote "cause of the curse" perished by drowning while Cowdray Castle itself was being destroyed by fire. This is what Mr. Morton calls "a real, ghost story." We imagine he means that this one is about as true as any story of prophecy—Bible or monkish.

The Pope has issued a decree that the plenary indulgence extends to those receiving it by radio in exactly the same way as those who receive it in the Pope's presence. Why not? We are sure that it will have as much effect in one way as it has in another. The paper from which the above is taken, probably with an unconscious humour, prints the above immediately over a displayed heading "Amusement Notices." Nothing could have been better.

### Fifty Years Ago

JESUS, not to be outdone by Moses, also on one occasion appeared with a flaming countenance which shone like the sun (Matt. xvii. 2). But we need not trouble about this superior but strictly private imitation of the great legislator. Neither need we trouble about any of the "rational" or irrational explanations of the brightness of Moses' face as a kind of natural phosphorescence or St. Elmo's fire or electric glow. The only rational explanation of the whole Mosaic narrative is utterly destructive of its credit as an historical record of fact. There is no more need to attempt quasi-rational explanations of the events of the Pentateuch than of the wonders recorded in the *Æneid* or in Rider Haggard's *Cleopatra* or *She*. The miraculous is the mythical. The explanation of the cow jumping over the moon is that the event never occurred, but was only imagined. If, however, we suppose for the moment that the Pentateuch speaks truly in describing the luminosity or phosphorescence of a "veiled prophet" who, unlike Mokanna, must not be regarded as an impostor, then we must ask ourselves some questions concerning the ethical significance of this divinely vouchsafed sign and wonder. Is a human glow-worm better suited for a solemn authentication of a great moral and legislative system; or for being exhibited by a Barnum to astonish the foolish and puzzle the wise? What is the moral value of a superstitious obedience won by such puerile means as the temporary manifestation of a property common to fire-flies, bad potatoes, and rotting fish? Is there not truth in Carlyle's idea that much, at least, of the vaunted light thrown by superstition and priestcraft is but a phosphorescence of moral decay shining in the darkness as putrefying organisms commonly do?

*The Freethinker*, August 11, 1889

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## Sugar Plums

We have often drawn attention to the fact that while calling upon the young men of the country to join the army in defence of freedom, this freedom does not extend to the matter on which every citizen in this country may practise. That is whether he shall attend Church or stay away. We know that a great many men in the army at any time would sooner stay away from Church parade than go. They are ordered there and, unless they wish to expose themselves to a semi-punishment dare not stay away. Any Church parade is sheer religious tyranny. No soldier would be the worse for staying away, and certainly no man who does not believe in religion is the better for going. Part of it, we think, is due to the "brass-hat" conviction which always acts as though when a man joins the army he should cease to exercise the full rights of a man; part to the churches who do not care what causes a man to attend Church so long as he attends. So we welcome the following letter from Mr. J. W. Poynter, which appeared in a recent issue of the *News-Chronicle*:—

It is officially stated that the Regular Army rules of compulsory church parades will be applied to the new Militia.

As your Free Church contemporary, *The Christian World*, July 27, states, in the Great War those parades were the most unpopular in the Army. If, now that all young men of one age are compulsorily enlisted, such parades are enforced on them, is not liberty of opinion on religious matters virtually denied, for a period, to the male population?

We wonder how many letters have been kept out of the Press since the new enlistments took place?

Those who listened to the broadcast by Gracie Fields on Sunday, July 30, will remember her remarks about the Bishop who came to see her and prayed for her recovery, after the operation. Gracie said that she found herself steadily gaining strength afterwards, and the most has been made of it by religious outsiders. We haven't the slightest doubt that if she had only believed

in the religion of the grand Lama of Tibet there would have been the same result in the same circumstances. In such circumstances, however, there is always a newspaper somewhere or other that cannot let go such an opportunity for exploiting ignorance and superstition. So the *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, has asked its readers to describe their experience of prayer, and the best one will receive a guinea for the best letter. At a guinea a time there should have been a good many replies.

One of our readers, however, sent a letter, of which he has forwarded us a copy. We do not know if it was printed, but we expect not, so we reproduce it here, with our compliments to the writer:—

Being a student of science I realize the futility of prayer except as a stimulus to those with a particularly feeble mind, but after reading your announcement on the front page of the *Evening Chronicle* for July 1, I decided to pray.

So last night I prayed that the time would not be far hence when newspaper editors would regard their readers as relatively civilized men and women; when, on recovery from illness due credit would be given to the doctors and their science in preference to the clergy and their chantings. I prayed that the press would become the vehicle of clear and sensible rationalized thought untainted by efforts like the one you are at present fostering.

I do not anticipate that anything will happen, but if it does I shall certainly consider it a Miracle of Prayer and shall write to you again.

The following is from the *Evening Standard* of August 3:—

The British Sabbath is in danger, but the councillors of Felixstowe have arisen in their wrath to protect its sanctity. They have forbidden Punch and Judy shows, on the grounds that they constitute an element of noise and disorder. For three centuries Punch has been strangling his infant child, bludgeoning his wife and defying the law, with not a voice raised to rebuke him. But the councillors of Felixstowe are not overawed by this mighty tradition. They claim, perhaps, that Punch and Judy first arrived at Dover as malevolent breakers of the peace with Continental habits determined to upset our quiet. And while we have champions such as the councillors of Felixstowe we may rest assured that no one will disturb that cemetery of the living which Englishmen call Sunday.

The Birkenhead Branch are holding their Annual Outing to Thurston, on Sunday, August 13. Merseyside Freethinkers and friends are cordially invited. Liverpool friends will meet at Woodside Approach at 2 p.m., booking through return tickets.

Mr. G. Whitehead returns to Bolton to-day (August 13) and will address meetings each evening during the week, with the exception of Tuesday evening, when he will visit Chorley and hold a meeting there. The following week Mr. Whitehead will be in Birmingham, after which he will spend a fortnight in Birkenhead. Pioneer Press literature can be obtained, or ordered, at all meetings, and local Branch officials will be pleased to meet unattached Freethinkers with a view to membership in the N.S.S.

The Lancashire Education Committee reports some curious answers by children to Examination Questions. In one case the children were asked, "Describe a castle, a cinema or a church." Only ten per cent chose Churches. The vast majority chose cinemas. Even those who chose churches as the subject of their essay were not wholly swayed by piety in their very free descriptions:—

"A church is very quiet, very like a cemetery"; while another says that "Church at night is like being in a city where nobody goes"; and another refers to "A black and white robed man who is called the curate, and other names." The writer of the last sentence, says the commentator, strikes me as giving the most evidence of being a church-goer, or, at least, of having some acquaintance with churchgoers, whose language he has overheard.



## Meddlesome Methodists

The toad beneath the harrow knows,  
Exactly where each tooth-point goes,  
The butterfly upon the road,  
Preaches contentment to that toad.—Kipling.

EVER since the Romish Church antagonized the English people by burning alive for their opinions, the Torquemada strain has manifested itself, mainly through Nonconformist channels. Perhaps the most notorious example is that of the Methodist Church, which for nearly two hundred years has sought to impose a yoke of austerity upon Britain. The original Methodists were actually the descendants of the old Puritans, who in the words of Macaulay, "groaned at the sight of Jack-in-the-Green, and who thought it impious to eat plum-pudding on Christmas Day." To Methodists, life was a vale of tears, and pleasure had no place. So severe was their outlook that their only relaxations were missionary meetings, tea-fights, services conducted by a converted burglar, or some other brand plucked from the burning, and, for a special treat, an exposure of nunneries. What a narrow and restricted life! The trouble was that these Methodists, not content with imposing such Stoicism upon their co-religionists, sought to force the whole country into the same austere pattern.

To Methodists, so many things were taboo. Dancing, the theatre, card-games, gambling in all forms, were all regarded as so many snares of Satan. Sunday observance was very strict. In many homes cold dinners formed the Sabbath menu, games were forbidden, reading (other than religious) was frowned at. In the nineteenth century teetotalism became prevalent in that sect, and justified Matthew Arnold's jest that their idea of heaven was "a glorified and unending tea-meeting."

This ascetic view of life may have satisfied strict Methodists themselves, but, obviously, it could not be forced upon the English people as a whole. The Methodists did their utmost to change national habits, and made themselves public nuisances in the process. They were for ever crusading against the "sinful" pleasures of the working classes. When a movement for a better and a brighter Sunday was inaugurated the Methodist Church did their very utmost in the cause of gloominess, as they later bitterly opposed Sunday excursions and the opening of cinemas. If a sports stadium was proposed in any district the Methodist Church was bound to be among its opponents. By packing the magisterial benches with teetotallers they have restricted the Englishman's liberty to such an extent that he cannot slake his thirst except at stated hours.

The latest move of these pious Pecksniffs is directed against football pools, which were described at the Methodist Conference at Liverpool as "one of the greatest paganizing influences at the present time." It was decided to approach Parliament (which means touting in the lobbies) to hamper such pools. Remembering the hampering of the Sunday opening of cinemas, and the absurd restrictions regarding the opening of shops on the Sabbath, we cannot see much difference between the malign activities of the Roman Catholic Church and its younger Methodist rival in trade. The Romish priests decide what films and plays their docile flocks shall see, and what newspapers and books they shall read, whilst the Protestant pastors wish to deprive people of so many forms of innocent enjoyment.

Continental working-men are not such innocents as to put up with such absurd clerical ruling. From Marseilles to Moscow, Sunday is the most cheerful day of the week, and, mark you, the places of wor-

ship are often fuller on the Continent than in Protestant England. So, the one solitary attempt at priestly argument that relaxation is paganizing is simply so much clerical fudge and make-believe. "Britons never shall be slaves" is a resounding line in "Rule Britannia," but the British working-man is too patient and too long-suffering. To attempt to introduce the English Sunday on the Continent would precipitate a revolution which would soon sweep Priestcraft before it. The Romish priests know this, and leave well alone. But is not a British working-man also a man and a brother that he should be treated worse than a coolie in a diamond-mine compound?

For pious persecuting campaigns of this kind, even though they fail to influence British character, can become fruitful causes of trouble. They embitter social relations, and they dislocate business. They give to foreigners an utterly false impression of the outlook of the ordinary Englishman, who is neither a numbskull nor a wicked person. It would be a thousand times better if there were no such Nosey-Parker campaigns muddling the issues and muddying the waters of our social life.

Methodists are for ever interfering with the amusements of the working-classes. The latest phase is directed against football-pools, but a short time since they were attacking dog-racing and Sunday relaxation. Before that, these men were shouting against the stage, the music-hall, and the cinema. Working-class people are, of sheer necessity, restricted in their choice of relaxation, but it is curious that, at every turn, they should be dictated to by middle-class "reverends," who, doubtless, consider themselves socially superior to so many of their fellow-citizens.

These "sons-of-God" always treat working-men as though they were Sunday-school children, and naughty ones at that. When will they learn the very simple lesson that workers of to-day are as sensible and sensitive as ministers of religion, and frequently more so? The Methodist clergy are continually acting as if they were still living in the eighteenth, and not the twentieth century. By acting as they do, most surely they tend to bring their religion into contempt in the eyes of all whose opinion is worth a straw.

It is in shocking bad taste for the Methodist Church to confine its energies by harrying the working-classes. If its Puritanical pastors are really interested in social problems, let them go to their wealthy patrons and tell these idle people that it is highly immoral to draw huge rents from slum property. Let them go to the colliery and railway magnates and tell them that men are exposed to death and mutilation in order to pay royalties and dividends to shareholders. Let them tell their aristocratic sympathizers that it is wicked that women should sew fashionable garments for a few pence, and that little children, and old-age pensioners, should be half-starved and ragged. Hundreds of thousands of men and women are unable to find work to do, and are living stunted lives in the richest country in the world, whilst the idle rich play the sedulous ape to Sodom and Gomorrah. Endless attempts to restrict the liberty of working-class people will not help humanity in the serious times in which we live. It is such institutions as that of the Methodist Church, with its mischievous Nosey-Parker traditions, that make men realize that this country will never be civilized, in the true sense of the word, whilst it has a Christian majority.

It is high time, however, that our laws were rationalized. The best kind of rationalization would be the sweeping away of that great conglomeration of petty and irritating restrictions which suggest to our Continental neighbours that the British working-man, in



the eyes of his rulers, cannot be trusted to behave himself. The present-day working man is the descendant of the men who founded the great Trade Unions, who started the Co-operative Movement, who inaugurated the National Secular Society. Why should such men be interfered with, and dictated to by an out-of-date ultra-ascetic body such as the Methodist Church, which outrages morality and cannot find pleasure, which violates decorum and cannot attain sanity? Joy and not pain should be the dominant influence of life.

MIMNERMUS

## Spring-Cleaning

"THERE was a time, a time for ever gone. Ah! woe is me" when I could find pleasure in rearranging my books, on their shelves, after the annual spring-cleaning. But as I *downward* trend, age and its accomplices make it no longer possible. They convince me that "Life requires an art to which *old men* must bend."

Youth, with proud, exalted vision hopes to pluck wisdom from the tree of life. But age knows that "wisdom is often nearer when we stoop than when we soar." Youth lacks the balance of age, and has yet to learn that every circumstance of which we seem the sport is but a veil hiding a precious jewel.

Meditating thus, after the storm had dwindled to a calm, I stood surveying my old friends in that state in which it had pleased the Fury with the abhorred *duster* to place them. And what a scene was there! But, why should we shrink from what we cannot shun? To unveil the hidden jewel.

Had Calvin and Rabelais lived together as closely and agreeably, for a few years, as they now do on my shelves, the history of the world would have been entirely different. This may seem, to many, a very ridiculous statement to make. It is anything but that. Coleridge speaks of the "moral elevation of Rabelais' works" and classes him "with the great creative minds of the world, Shakespeare, Dante, Cervantes, etc." And many other great cities corroborate Coleridge.

Rabelais, educated as a monk, studied medicine, qualified as a doctor, and devoted his life to the service of the poor. "With a jollity of mind pickled in the scorn of fortune," he made the valley wherein he lived and worked ring with laughter, in which his assistant—a donkey upon which he rode—occasionally joined. He loved his fellowmen. He knew no worship but work. His ideal is suggested in Brown-ing's question:—

Why lose this life i' the meantime, since its use  
May be to make the next life more intense?

To expend energy needed so badly for the amelioration of appalling misery and disease, surrounding him, on the vague, the remote, the unknown—the "Grand Perhaps," as he phrased it—was to him sheer blasphemy. He was a great philosopher. His views on education, liberty, the freedom of women, war, etc., are yet in advance of our time. For his views on War see Book I, Chapter L., and note how far he was ahead of President Wilson's "Fourteen Points." Had his victorious Gargantua made a similar speech to the Germans at Versailles we would have had a saner world to-day. For his views on Education, the Freedom of Women, etc., see Book I., Chapters lii.-lviii., in which he describes the Abbey of Theleme. He lived in a coarse age (1488-1553) and like the late W. S. Gilbert, thought—with stronger reason—that "he who would make his fellow creatures wise

must always gild the philosophic pill." The gilt he used, to avoid being burned at the stake, tortured, or imprisoned for life, was what was appreciated by the monks and gentry of his day. And he cannot be blamed for that, surely! Coarse he certainly was, but never immoral. He carefully avoids the suggestive.

To Calvin (1509-1564) this world was a vale of tears; more so after his advent! Laughter and jollity were sinful things, to be kept down with a stern hand—"woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep." As Dictator of Geneva for some twenty years he repressed nearly everything human, and made of earth a veritable Hell. Under his rule freedom was entirely suppressed. The complete subjection of women was one of his strong points. The hair of women had to be worn a-la-Calvin. Women were not allowed to speak to men in the street. They were even instructed how they must comport themselves in bed after childbirth. Dancing, games, music, indeed everything likely to gladden the heart of man were strictly prohibited. Of sullen visage, Byron pictures Calvin (the Devil!) for us in the *Vision of Judgment*:—

His brow was like the deep when tempest toss'd;  
Fierce and unfathomable thoughts engraved  
Eternal wrath on his immortal face,  
And where he gazed a gloom pervaded space.

Dr. Michael Servetus, because of a slight difference of opinion, Calvin devoutly burned, in Geneva. Many he tortured and imprisoned. No one within his reach escaped, all doubters beyond his grasp, in Byron's phraseology, he cursed:—

And doomed *them* to the Zealot's ready Hell,  
Which answers to all doubts so eloquently well.

Calvin believed himself predestinated by God to act as he did. "Of his sincerity of purpose," we are told, "there can be no doubt." But sincerity is not always a proof of sanity. Sincere fools characterize every age. To-day their name is legion!

From this brief sketch of these two men I think it will be evident to readers that Rabelais' way of living was more Christ-like than Calvin's. And I am of opinion, therefore, that if Calvin—the narrow-minded theological bigot—had been, for a few years, closely associated with Rabelais—the laughter provoking, freedom-loving humanist, the history of the world would have been entirely different.

Burns and Herrick, a curiously assorted pair, tempt me to venture a few remarks.

Herrick lived beside Sir John Suckling on my shelves. Gaiety and charm of manner united them. Herrick and Suckling were well-educated men. Artificiality was evident in all their work. Burns, because of his lack of education, puts his heart into his verse and was able to keep artificiality out. A word-perfect and heartless Burns is inconceivable. Heart speaks to heart. His songs, therefore, are the key to his greatness. "He shows himself," says Carlyle, "at least a poet of Nature's own making, and Nature, after all, is still the grand agent in making poets." In the *Epistle to John Lapraik* Burns explains himself. He asked, he tells us, for "a spark O' Nature's fire." He received a live spark, surely! And how this world has responded. In a recent letter, from Moscow, I was told that Burns is a favourite poet in Russia. And that he has been translated into the many languages spoken in the U.S.S.R. He was certainly a remarkable man. Scott was impressed with his general appearance, and particularly noted his eyes—"I have never seen such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men in my time."



As his works are well known it is needless entering into detail. Carlyle very briefly says all that may be necessary:—

"With what tenderness he sings, yet with vehemence and entireness! There is a piercing wail in his sorrow, and the purest rapture in his joy; he burns with the sternest ire, or laughs with the loudest or slicest mirth; and yet he is sweet and soft, 'sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet, and soft as their parting tear.' If we take into account the immense variety of his subjects; how from the loud flowing revel in *Willie Brewed a Peck o' Maut*, to the still rapt enthusiasm of sadness for *Mary in Heaven*; from the glad, kind greeting of *Auld Lang Syne*, or the comic archness of *Duncan Grey*, to the fiery fury of *Scots wha hae wi' Wallace Bled*, he has found a tone and words for every mood of man's heart—it will be small praise if we rank him as the first of all our song-writers; for we know not where to find one worthy of being second to him."

Between Burns and Herrick there is a deep gulf fixed. No "Blast o' Janwar' win'" was ever permitted to visit Robert Herrick's face too roughly. From birth nursed in the lap of luxury—the tutorship of "Misfortunes, great and sma'," unfortunately, denied him. Educated for the Church, he lived and died a clergyman. He had a fine poetic gift.

No one can deny the gay and charming spirit pervading the *Hesperides*, or the religious fervour of *His Noble Numbers*, and that the exquisite execution of both make delightful reading. But if it be asked, "Of what did he write so exquisitely?" Various answers may be given. Herrick, briefly put, wrote with his head. Burns wrote with his heart. Lack of much intellectual training did not prevent Burns from finding expression for his genius. Herrick would, in all probability, never have written a line without it. He may be said to have treated all his subjects with a faultless uniformity. His choice descriptions of old customs are well known to students of Folk Lore; His charming lyrics to lovers of good literature, e.g. :—

Gather ye rose-buds while ye may,  
Old time is still a flying;  
And this same flower that smiles to-day  
To-morrow will be dying.

But why did he write the following lines at the close of the *Hesperides*? :—

To his books end this last line he'd have plac't,  
Jocund his muse was but his Life was chast

He had good reasons probably for thinking that many of his pieces would be misunderstood and made evil use of. He would have been denounced by the Christian world had he been a heretic. But his very failings leaned to virtues' side, because he was a clergyman.

In the *Hesperides* one hundred and fifty poems are to be found on love and lovers. Some one hundred and forty of them are addressed to Julia, Anthea, Electra, and seventeen others. Fifty of these poems are addressed to Julia alone, and an average of five each to the others. Julia was, evidently, Herricks' leading lady! Of her he writes: *Julia's Breasts; Her Legs; Her Knees; Her Petticoats; The Nipples of Julia's Breasts*, and so on, and similarly so with the others. One would have thought that *Julia's Soul* would have got honourable mention, but no, even to a clergyman she held metal more attractive!

Now, these poems and that of *The Poet Loves a Mistress, But Not to Marry*, leaves one little choice of thinking, but that however chaste his *Life* may have been, his *mind* certainly was not.

Robert Burns and Robert Herrick had one thing in common—a Christian name. Burns was a man. Her-

rick was a priest. Sydney Smith (himself a priest), tells us that we have three sexes—men, women and priests. If fate had thrown these two men together one result of that union, at least, I think would have accrued, that Herrick would have become more of a man and less of a priest.

GEORGE WALLACE

## Dolet: The Freethought Martyr\*

(Continued from page 508)

### IV.

LATE in May or early in June, 1534, Dolet hastily left Toulouse to avoid a second arrest. He was suffering from a fever, probably brought on by mental anxiety, and he retired to a friend's house in the country, partly to conceal himself, and partly to recruit his health while he shaped his future plans.

Towards the end of July he set out for Lyons, where he arrived on the first of August, worn out in body and mind. "When I reached Lyons," he afterwards wrote to De Boyssone, "I had no hope of restoration to health, and even despaired of my life."

Lyons was then, perhaps, the most liberal city in France. It afforded far more intellectual freedom than Paris, and many persecuted scholars and thinkers sought shelter within its walls. Rabelais, Marot, Servetus, Des Periers, all passed several years of their lives at Lyons between 1530 and 1540, whilst Erasmus, Estienne, Pole, Sadolet, Calvin, and Beza were frequent visitors. Here, it is said, was founded the first of those Academies for which France became afterwards so famous. "But," says Mr. Christie, "it was not only by the presence of men of letters and science that Lyons was distinguished in the sixteenth century, but also by the extraordinary activity of its press, which rivalled that of Paris itself. Lyons was the second town in France where the art of printing was exercised, but it achieved a greater distinction than Paris, inasmuch as from its presses issued the first books printed in France in the French tongue." It was at Lyons that Gargantua and Pantagruel first saw the light, and that Marot first printed his "Enfer" and a complete edition of his works.

On his restoration to health Dolet formed an acquaintance with several of the leading men of letters in this city, amongst whom was Rabelais himself. His acquaintance with the greatest Frenchmen then living soon ripened into intimacy and close friendship.

Dolet now worked hard at his Commentaries on the Latin Tongue, and early in October, 1534, he went to Paris to obtain the royal licence for the publication of his work. Before the middle of 1535 he had returned and published a Dialogue against Erasmus, who had attacked the Ciceronians. Melancthon paid it the high compliment of saying that "it ought to be answered, if not by Erasmus, at least by someone." It had a wide circulation, and it decisively introduced his name to the world of letters.

The literary aspirations of Dolet and of all his brethren were at this time, however, in danger of being baffled. King Francis was dreadfully worried by the seraphic doctors of Sorbonne, who urged him to make amends for his vicious life by persecuting heretics and suppressing literature. On the 7th of June, 1533, the Sorbonne presented to the King at Lyons "a memorial against heretical books, in which it was formally urged that if the King wished to preserve the Catholic faith, which was already shaken at

\* Etienne Dolet, the Martyr of the Renaissance. A Biography. By R. C. Christie. Macmillan & Co. A review reprinted from the *Freethinker* of 1881.



its base and attacked on all parts, he must abolish once and for ever by a severe edict the art of printing, which every day gave birth to dangerous books." For a time these black gentry were foiled by Budé and Jean du Bellay, but in 1535 they succeeded, and the King, on the 13th of January, issued letters patent prohibiting and forbidding under pain of death any person from henceforth printing any book or books in France, and at the same time ordering all booksellers' shops to be closed under the same penalty. But the opposition to this infamous edict was so great that it had to be withdrawn, and on the 24th of February the King "directed the Parliament to choose twenty-four well qualified and prudent persons, out of whom the King should select twelve, to whom alone permission was to be given to print in Paris editions of needful and approved books, but forbidding even the twelve to print any new composition under pain of death." The Parliament, however, again remonstrated, and the new letters patent became a dead letter.

The circumstance which induced the King to yield to the solicitations of the Sorbonne was in itself trivial. In October, 1534, some placards were affixed to the walls of Paris, violently attacking the mass and the clergy. The Catholics were strongly incensed, and the result was a more severe persecution of heretics than Paris had ever before witnessed. From the 10th of November, 1534, to the 5th of May, 1535, twenty-two persons were burnt for heresy in the Place Maubert, and the King and the Court are said to have witnessed the most horrid of these spectacles, where six heretics were burnt together, and the *strappado* was first used. This delightful instrument was invented by the priests. Mr. Christie describes it as "a kind of see-saw, with a heretic at one end suspended above a fire. He was allowed to descend and burn for a short time, and was then drawn out again, and so on from time to time. By this means the burning lasted much longer, the torment was much more exquisite to the heretic, and the spectacle much more grateful to the pious spectators."

The doctor who invented the *guillotine* perished under its swift blade himself; and if these sweet priests who invented the *strappado* had themselves been slowly roasted to death, who could say that their doom was too severe?

G. W. FOOTE

## Prophecies, Witches and Knells

INDIA is a land saturated with religion, in fact judging by the number of its exacting religious ceremonies and the scrupulousness with which they are performed, no race in the world is more devout than the Hindus. It is not surprising that the land teems with superstition which contact with Western civilization has not diminished. In the South it appears to be more prevalent than in other parts, and a stranger arriving for the first time in the lower part of the Peninsula can hardly fail to notice the restrictions which the natives impose upon themselves to avoid, so they believe, some misfortune which would inevitably overtake them if they failed to do so.

In a part of the Madras Presidency certain classes believe in what they term a bad time, which being interpreted means that on many days of the year there are certain intervals during which all believers in this faith must exercise great care, otherwise they are likely to meet with bad luck. As the intervals during the day are fairly numerous, a retentive memory is essential to avoid mishaps. This difficulty however is met by the publication of a special almanac showing the bad times.

These almanacs are usually carried about by the believers in the superstition, and if an almanac showed that the "bad times" on a certain day were, say, from 9.0 a.m. to 9.10 a.m., 2.10 p.m. to 2.20 p.m., and 6.0 p.m. to 6.10 p.m., they would, if possible, remain inactive during these intervals. I have known clerks arriving at a tramway station at say 6.0 p.m., in time to catch a tram starting at 6.5 p.m., purposely delay their departure until the next tram, to avoid the unpleasant consequences which would, they believe, have overtaken them had they commenced the journey during the "bad time."

I have asked Hindu clerks under my supervision to prepare certain statements, and after arranging with them the form these were to take, I have seen them glance furtively at a document protruding from their pockets. At first I could not understand their action, but I soon discovered that they were thinking of their almanacs which they would consult in all probability immediately they left my presence. Nothing would induce them, if they could possibly help it, to commence the statements during the dangerous times, because they felt convinced that serious mistakes would be inevitable if they did so.

Owing to special circumstances it was sometimes imperative for certain work to be commenced without delay, notwithstanding that the time selected for the start clashed with the warnings in the almanac. In these instances I cannot say that I ever noticed that mistakes were more numerous or glaring than usual. Occasionally I would mention this awkward fact to some of the clerks concerned, but they were always ready with an answer—if they had not made any serious errors, it was because their deity had been kind to them.

One morning the head of a section in the office, a well-educated and intelligent Mysore Brahmin, came to see me. He explained that he had just received a letter from Mysore announcing the death of his nephew, and it was his desire to leave for that town by the evening train. I gave him permission and he departed, leaving me under the impression that he would undertake the journey that night. The following morning, to my surprise, he came to see me looking, I thought, somewhat shamefaced. To my question asking why he had not gone to Mysore, he murmured a reply to the effect that he was almost ashamed to say. He was reluctant to talk, but eventually I elicited these details from him:—

In Mysore a superstition prevails to the effect that if a man witnesses crows in the act of copulation during daylight (a very rare sight in that province) he is doomed to die before sunset unless he immediately causes to be sent to his nearest relative an advice of his death. After this, the matter may be adjusted by the despatch of a second communication explaining the circumstances under which the first had been sent. The nephew had witnessed such an event and had taken the usual precaution. The second communication—a telegram—had been received just in time to stop the uncle, hence his appearance at the office.

I asked the uncle for his candid opinion of the superstition, and he expressed nothing but ridicule for it. However, when I enquired what he would do if he witnessed a similar occurrence, he confessed that an ingrained fear would compel him to do precisely what his nephew had done.

These superstitions were not prevalent in my time in the Bombay Presidency. Others quite as absurd prevailed, however, but as they were so numerous I will confine myself to a reference to one in connexion with which I played a conspicuous part.

At one time I collected ornithological specimens. Hearing that a large owl had taken up its quarters in a well in my compound I informed my servant of my



intention to shoot it, and asked him to make arrangements for recovery of the bird after it had fallen in the water in the well. He appeared horrified, explaining that among the natives in that part of India it was considered most improper to shoot an owl. Anyone doing so, he said, would assuredly meet with trouble.

I shot the bird early next morning, and in the evening went to the cricket ground for some practice at the nets. A native youth whom we called "Jones," owing to the similarity of the pace of his deliveries to those of the then celebrated Australian fast bowler of that name, was bowling, and with his first delivery to me he got well home on my left eye, just failing to knock it out of its socket. I was laid up for nearly a month, the accident necessitating a visit to a specialist in Bombay, and putting me to a lot of expense, to say nothing of the suffering I had to endure.

My servant, although most sympathetic to my face always told my friends that I richly deserved my punishment. I have no doubt the affair will be handed down in the district from father to son for generations, and quoted as proof of the inevitable punishment awaiting anyone defying the popular belief as I did.

To an Englishman such superstitions may appear grotesque, but are they more so than his belief in the danger associated with seeing a new moon for the first time through glass, the bad luck connected with Friday and the number thirteen, and the ridiculous dogmas of his religion including that monstrous absurdity known to him as Hell? I trow not.

PRO REASON

## Correspondence

### RUSSIA AND GERMANY

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Your invariably sane and logical attitude in International questions, and your consistent support of the Soviet Union, both in its great work of social reconstruction as well as its struggle for collective resistance to the Fascist terror, are an unflinching source of encouragement and inspiration.

Therefore one regrets the suggestion in this week's issue of even the possibility of "an alliance between Russia and Germany." Surely no one who sees in the present world situation a struggle between two diametrically opposed forces, between all that is best in civilization, of which Soviet Russia to-day is the highest expression, against the doctrine of brute force, of which Germany to-day is the principal exponent, can believe for one moment that there is the slightest possibility of the reconciliation of such irreconcilables?

It is true that Soviet Russia, in accordance with its declared policy of maintaining peaceful business relations with all countries willing to reciprocate, maintains such relations with the Fascist States, including Germany. That is no less realistic or understandable than that Freethinkers should maintain peaceful business relations with those who believe in the existence of a personal God. On the other hand, Soviet Russia has repeatedly declared its willingness (e.g., in the case of the Fascist attacks on China and Abyssinia) to engage with other peace-desiring nations in the application of economic and military sanctions against the aggressors; just as any sensible Freethinker would co-operate with any peace-loving neighbour to resist a disturber of the peace.

But whatever the outcome of the present Anglo-Soviet negotiations may be—and it is quite clear that if Mr. Chamberlain has his way they will come to nothing—that Soviet Russia should even consider an alliance with its antithesis, Fascist Germany, is as unthinkable as that the editor of the *Freethinker* will announce next week his conversion to the holy Catholic faith.

ALBERT INKPIN

## WOMEN AND RELIGION

SIR,—You ask for the opinion of women on women worshippers. When I was young I observed, as a Christian among Christians, that married women, though most regular attendants at church and chapel, were "never," I quote myself, religious.

Later years, bringing a wider experience, and more knowledge of men and women, have confirmed that youthful conviction—with this modification, that unmarried women, lonely widows, and the unhappily mated do, to fill the void, take to religion.

The ordinary married woman attends public worship because it is a mark of respectability, and in other ways a social asset from the maternal standpoint.

On the other hand religions are made by men. They live, write, quarrel, fight, persecute, lie, rob, massacre for one religion after another.

Women have many regrettable, irritating qualities, but they are not like men, given to spirituality. Take away the social benefits of church attendance, and give every woman a husband, and above all a child, and women worshippers would quickly become extinct, leaving to men the pastime of proving the existence of First Causes, Supreme Beings, etc.

M. A. HOOLE

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

### LONDON

#### OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.30, Mrs. N. Buxton.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. 3.30, Parliament Hill Fields, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Friday, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 7.0, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Rushcroft Road, opposite Blixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, Mrs. E. Grout. Liverpool Grove, Walworth Road, 8.0, Friday, A Lecture.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 8.0, Wednesday, Mrs. Buxton and Mr. Carpenter. 8.0, Thursday, Mr. Saphin. 8.0, Friday, Mr. Barnes. 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Tuson and Collins. 7.30, Sunday, Messrs. Barnes, Dunne, Tuson and Wood.

### COUNTRY

#### OUTDOOR

BIRKENHEAD BRANCH N.S.S. (Haymarket): 8.0, Saturday, Mr. J. V. Shortt. Catherine Street, off Grange Road, 8.0, Wednesday, Mr. D. Robinson.

BLACKBURN (Market): 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Mound): 7.0, Mrs. Muriel Whitefield (Glasgow).

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Albert Road): Tuesday, 8.0. Thursday, 8.0, Minard Road. Friday, 8.0, Rose Street, Sauchiehall Street. Muriel Whitefield will speak at these meetings.

HAPTON: 7.30, Monday, Mr. J. Clayton.

NELSON (Chapel Street): 8.0, Wednesday, Mr. J. Clayton.

SCOUTBOTROM (Rossendale): 7.30, Friday, Mr. J. Clayton.

WIGAN MARKET: 7.30, Sunday, August 13, to Saturday, August 19, with the exception of Tuesday. Chorley Market: 7.45, Tuesday, August 15. Mr. G. Whitehead will speak at these meetings.



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